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SUBJECT: IRAN ASYLUM SEEKER ALLEGES TORTURE AND SIGNS OF
ROBERT LEVINSON

REF: REFTEL ANKARA 1370

Classified By: Classified By: Consul Karen Ogle for reasons 1.4(b,d)

¶1. (S/NF) SUMMARY: On Monday October 19th, CONOFF and LEGATT interviewed Ebrahim Ali MEHTARI (strictly protect), an Iranian asylum seeker in Ankara, regarding MEHTARI's claims that he saw writing by Robert LEVINSON at an Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) detention center during MEHTARI's professed confinement and torture. MEHTARI claimed he saw three lines written in English on the frame of his cell door and the name "B. LEVINSON" written underneath. MEHTARI was not able to provide more detail concerning the three lines other than he suspects they were a plea for help. MEHTARI also detailed his abduction, captivity and torture.
END SUMMARY.

¶2. (S/NF) MEHTARI told us that on August 19th he was abducted outside his workplace, while walking out to purchase cigarettes a few blocks from Tehran University. He described how men in masks got out of one car and forced him into another nearby car in which they bound and blindfolded him, and forced his head to the floor of the car. He believes that based on the location where he was abducted and the turns made, that the car turned onto Enghelab Street and continued eastward for 45 minutes, stopping somewhere in East Tehran. He believes they weaved in and out of a special road used for military personnel buses which runs parallel to Enghelab Street. The abductors parked inside what he believes to be an Iran-Iraq era detention center and based on what he could hear, led him through a busy office and then downstairs to an isolated area. Upon entering, MEHTARI said he threw-up due to the strong smell of blood. He was then quickly taken to an area where his head was shaved.

¶3. (S/NF) While in confinement MEHTARI said he was blindfolded constantly with the exception of when he was in his cell. He drew a picture of the cell which indicated that he had to sleep diagonally across the room to be able to fully lie down. He said he heard other prisoners but had no idea how many there were but everyone appeared to have their own cell. He indicated he did not hear any foreign languages spoken by the other detainees except for Kurdish. He claimed that in the middle of the left side of his cell door frame there were three lines written in English with the name "B. LEVINSON" written underneath. He said that at the time he did not know who LEVINSON was and only after his release did he use the search engine google to find that LEVINSON was a missing American citizen. At that point MEHTARI made contact with LEVINSON's family, via an FBI setup website, in order to notify them about what he had seen.

¶4. (S/NF) MEHTARI alleges that he was beaten and tortured while under constant questioning by various teams of guards. He claimed they burned his head and back with cigarettes and that they had restrained him to a bed and beat his feet. He showed CONOFF the scars he had on his wrists from the

bindings. MEHTARI noted that at one point the beatings became worse when Iranian newspapers incorrectly published articles claiming he was a member of the Mujahedin Enghelab reformist party. MEHTARI denied claims that he was ever a member of this group but admitted to CONOFF that he was associated with reformist groups. He then explained he believes he was abducted due to photos which he had posted on Facebook of himself with Mohammad KHATAMI and former Italian Prime Minister Romano PRODI during their October 2008 trip to Yazd. Due to his blindfold, he could not offer much information to describe the guards. At one point he heard them use the names, "Karimi", "Sayyed", and "Doctor".

¶15. (S/NF) During MEHTARI's interrogation the guards constantly asked him about his photos with KHATAMI and MEHTARI's reformist activities. MEHTARI also claims that the interrogators used a "good guy bad guy" technique and at one point the "good guy" offered him juice to drink. After drinking the juice he claims he felt a warm sensation, then heaviness, and for days after could not sleep. Towards the end of his detainment MEHTARI said that he was taken by a few of the guards and sodomized with a stick-like instrument. He noted that the bleeding was so bad that a doctor had to come to examine him but gave no treatment. He was then beaten some more and he believes that they decided to release him as they thought he would die from a head wound he received during one of the final beatings. He was then dumped on the street after four days of captivity, around August 23, 2009.

¶16. (S/NF) MEHTARI was reasonably certain that the detention center was an IRGC facility. He said that the abductors wore plainclothes and were not organized, which indicates that

ANKARA 00001520 002 OF 002

they were not regular army or police officers. He also said that when his parents were looking for him, the police, Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Intelligence denied any knowledge of his whereabouts. He alleges that he later saw a piece paper about his detention which had a quote from the Quran which he said was associated with the IRGC. It was unclear to CONOFF where he saw the piece of paper. MEHTARI also noted that the area of East Tehran in which he believes he was held is known for military and IRGC installations. He also believes the detention center was rectangular in shape with offices on the top floor and the detention center in the basement.

¶17. (S/NF) MEHTARI is the second Iranian citizen that Embassy Ankara has interviewed regarding alleged torture and sodomy by IRGC authorities after post election unrest (reftel). MEHTARI's story of abduction and abuse closely mirrors that of the previous allegations made to us by Ebrahim SHARIFI (strictly protect)(reftel). The same day Post had brief phone contact with Maryam SABRI(strictly protect), another alleged torture and rape victim currently in Ankara, who previously had printed pro-MOUSAVI posters. We advised all of the alleged victims to contact and register with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees office in Ankara in order to seek status as legally protected refugees in Turkey and to be eligible for onward resettlement. All have said they have done so.

¶18. (S/NF) COMMENT: Although there appears to be consistency among the various reports of rape and torture by the claimants, post is unable to confirm the veracity of their allegations. MEHTARI asked us for no favors, so we cannot speculate on why he informed us about LEVINSON. END COMMENT.

JEFFREY

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